

# Student Loans In and Out of Bankruptcy

UTCLE: 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Consumer Bankruptcy Conference

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## Current State of Student Loans in the U.S.

Student loan debt currently totals about \$1.56 trillion

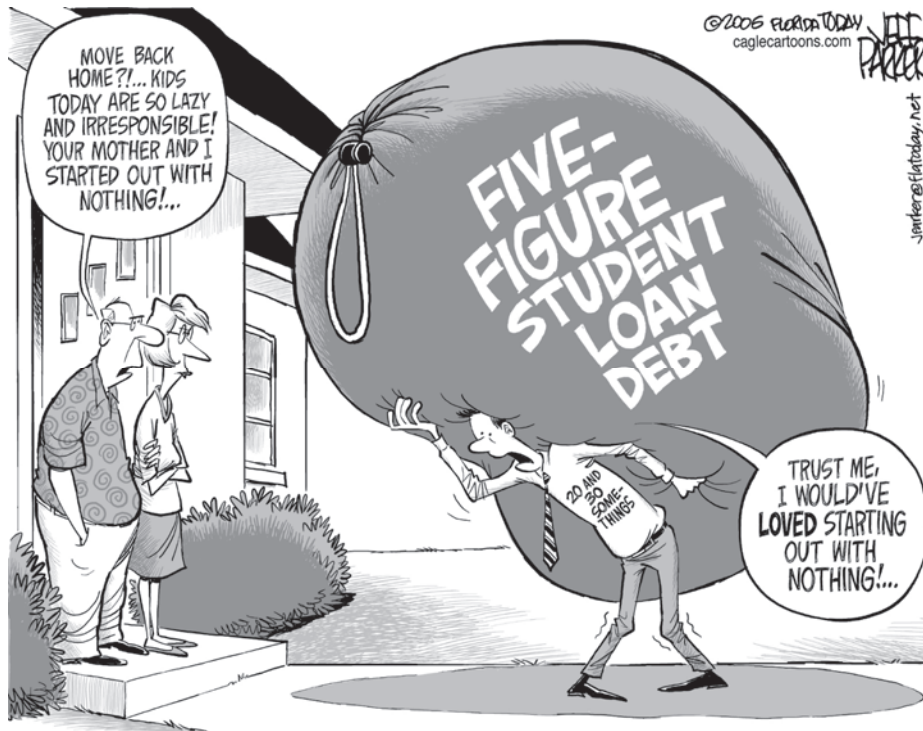
Approximately 45 million borrowers in the U.S.

- Median student loan debt is \$17,000
- Average student loan interest rate is 5.8%

Student loan debt is now the second highest consumer debt—behind only mortgage debt—and higher than both credit card and auto loan debts

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## A Brief History of Student Loans in Bankruptcy Cases

### ▪ Education Amendments Act of 1976

- Barred discharge of qualified student loans, absent undue hardship, for a period of five years from the date payments commenced

### ▪ Bankruptcy Code Amendments of 1978

- The student loan exception to discharge was moved from the Higher Education Act to the Bankruptcy Code
- Expanded to include private loans backed by non-profit institutions
- 5-year period ran from the date the loan “first become due,” no tolling period during any suspension

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## A Brief History of Student Loans in Bankruptcy Cases

- **1990 Bankruptcy Code Amendments**

- Increased discharge bar period from 5 to 7 years

- **1998 Bankruptcy Code Amendments**

- Removed 7-year time bar, thereby requiring a showing of undue hardship to discharge a government-backed loan or a private loan backed by a non-profit

- **2005 Bankruptcy Code Amendments**

- Expanded the type of loans excepted from discharge, absent a showing of undue hardship
- Absent a showing of undue hardship, all qualified loans, including most private loans, now excepted from discharge

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16<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Consumer Bankruptcy Practice session  
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